

Pol 611 - Comparative Political Economy

Spring Semester 2021

Instructor: Andrew Roberts
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Office Hours: By appointment

This class introduces students to the basics of comparative political economy. Political economy studies the mutual influences of politics and economics – how does politics affect the economy and how does the economy affect politics. The field covers many of the most fundamental questions in political science such as: Why are some countries rich and others are poor? Why do some countries distribute income equally while others are highly unequal? And why have some countries adapted to globalization while others have not?

The course will be divided into two parts. The first half will focus on the political economy of development. We will consider the main explanations for why some countries have grown rapidly and others continue to stagnate as well as consider ways to improve the economic performance of poor countries. The second half will look at the political economy of the advanced industrial states. How do their economies work and which forms of political economy are best prepared to succeed in the future?

Course Structure

The course will contain synchronous and asynchronous elements. I will post a set of short lectures in advance of each class period. You should view these lectures before class and answer the multiple-choice questions that conclude each one. I will post discussion questions for each class. You should write a one paragraph response to one of these per week on the course discussion board. We will use class periods to talk about your responses to these questions and answer other questions about the material.

Course Requirements

Evaluation will be based on three components. First, students should participate by responding to discussion questions. Students will also prepare one in-class presentation of a topic that we do not have time to cover in class. I will recommend helpful resources in preparing these presentations. The presentations should last ~10 minutes with another 5 minutes for discussion.

Potential topics for in-class presentations (you may propose others as well):

- Part 1: Resource Curse, Corruption, Foreign Aid, Property Rights

- Part 2: Globalization, Lobbying, Campaign Finance, Eurozone Crisis

Second, students will be required to write one short paper. Students can choose between an evaluation of a debate between prominent theorists of development or an analysis of survey data. The paper should be approximately 3-4 pages in length. Details about the paper will be distributed in class.

Third, students will complete a midterm and a final exam. These exams will be open-book and open-note. Students will have 24 hours to complete the exam.

Course Evaluation

Class Participation and Presentation:	20%
Short Paper:	15%
Midterm Exam:	30%
Final Exam:	35%

Course Outline

PART 1 - Political Economy of Development

Introduction (March 5)

Lesson 1 – The Facts of Development (March 12)

- Lant Pritchett, “Divergence: Big Time”, *Journal of Economic Perspectives* (1997)
- Dani Rodrik, “The Past, Present, and Future of Economic Growth” (only pages 1-34)

Lesson 2 – Geography and Development (March 19)

- Jared Diamond, *Guns, Germs, and Steel*, chapter 4.
- Paul Collier, *The Bottom Billion*, chapters 2 & 4

Lesson 3 – The State and Development (March 26)

- Peter Evans, "Predatory, Developmental and Other Apparatuses: A Comparative Political Economy Perspective on the Third World State," *Sociological Forum* (1989)
- William Easterly, “Governments Can Kill Growth” in *The Elusive Quest for Growth*

Lesson 4 – Democracy and Development (April 9)

- Acemoglu and Robinson, *Why Nations Fail: The Origins of Power, Prosperity, and Poverty*, chapters 2-4.
- Dani Rodrik, “Goodbye Washington Consensus, Hello Washington Confusion”, *Journal of Economic Literature* (2006).

Paper #1 Due (April 9)

Midterm Exam – Take Home (April 16)

PART 2 - The Political Economy of Advanced Industrial States

Lesson 5 – Basics of the Democratic Capitalist Order (April 23)

- Francis Fukuyama, “The End of History”
- Claus Offe, “Competitive Party Democracy and the Keynesian Welfare State: Factors of Stability and Disorganization”, *Policy Sciences* (1983).

Lesson 6 – The Welfare State (April 30)

- Gosta Esping-Andersen, “The Three Political Economies of the Welfare State.” *Canadian Review of Sociology and Anthropology* (1989).
- Paul Pierson, “The New Politics of the Welfare State”, *World Politics* (1996)

Lesson 7 – Public Choice (May 7)

- James Buchanan, “Politics without Romance”
- Bryan Caplan, “The Myth of the Rational Voter: Why Democracies Choose Bad Policies”

Lesson 8 – Inequality & Business (May 14)

- Paul Krugman, “Why We’re in a New Gilded Age”, *New York Review of Books*
- Tyler Cowen, *Big Business: A Love Letter*, chapter 1

Paper #2 Due (May 21)

FINAL EXAM – Take Home – May 28